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FROM DARKNESS INTO LIGHT

A RELIGIOUS PLAY, OF STREET LIFE
AND IN THE SLUMS OF NEW
YORK CITY. FIVE SCENES

(C.)



Written in Columbus City, Iowa, February 11, 1910
BY CHARLES E. THOMAS

SCENE I

On the Streets of New York City

Billie de kid, a street boy of the Bowery about 14 years old. Rough clothing. Comes onto the stage from the right side.

Blind Phil, a preacher, comes on the stage from the left side feeling his way very cautious with a cane.

Billie stops and waits for the blind man and as he is passing takes a watch from his pocket.

Mr. Mulligan, a policeman comes onto the stage from the right side and as Billie turns to go off stage (right side) he is met by Mr. Mulligan who takes hold of Billie by the arm.

Mr. Mulligan. So your be afther being a thafe are ye? Well begoria I'll tache yer a lesson. I'll take yer over to the Elizabeth street station and we will be hearing what yer has to say fer yerself—(he takes watch from Billie.)

Blind Phil. What is the trouble my friends?

Mulligan. The boy here was afther staleng yer watch from yer pocket yer honor—(Gives Phil the watch.)

Billie. Oh Mister! don't let dis cop runs me in. I am sorry dat I tried to swipe yer ticker. I only wanted somethin' to eat. I thot I could soak de ticker fer nuff fer me and me mudder to grub on till dad came back—onest injun mister—ever kid on de bowery will tell yer dat Billie de kid am on de square.

Mulligan. Misther don't yer be afther belaveing him—he is one of the wurst thaves from the Battery to Harlem. Begoria I nose the geizer

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Phil. (To Mulligan) My friend, if you will allow me to, I would like to ask this boy what his name is and where he lives?

Billie. Me name is Billie De Kid. I lives wherever me be, here on de Bowery, or down by the bridge or in City Hall Park or any old place—dat I am. Me Mudder lives at de corner of de Bowery and Bloom street.

Phil. What do you do?

Billie. Me shines shoes, sells de papers and does wot eber me gets to do.

Phil. (To Mulligan) Kind Sir, will you please let me take the boy with me? I don't want him arrested.

Mulligan. Begoria dis snoozer am a dead game tough—and a bad one to be afthur turning loose.

Phil. Mr. officer I will be responsible for this boy—here is my card. (Hands Mulligan a card.)

Mulligan. (Reads aloud.)

Rev. Phillip Kline, No. 221 W. 12th St. New York.

Mulligan. I am afthur thinking that you don't know what you are doing in having this spaldeen released. Sure, I don't like this at all at all.

Phil. Be merciful as ye may expect mercy.

Mulligan. Well take the kid and may the best of luck be with you. (Mulligan goes off left side.) The boy and Phil goes off right side

Curtain

End of 1st Scene

SCENE II

A poorly furnished room, a poorly dressed woman and little girl about 12 years old seated at a table eating only bread and potatoes.

Nelle. (The woman)

Say Sis Y don't you do as Billie does? He allers brings in somethin' to help along. If yer swipe things from de rich guys it am doing yer duty to yer dad and mudder. De rich am no rite to hab more den they need. It am our rite to take all dat we can get.

Your daddy is now in de coop cause dat rich guy cused him of robbery when Jeems only took a little of all de riches dat that man has.

Florence. Mother tell me to sell papers, to shine shoes, to beg on de streets, to scrub de floors or do any thing that is work but O Mother, don't tell me to steal. I can not do what I know is wrong. Please don't ask me to do wrong.

Nelle. (Very angry) Does zee tink dat yous are better den yor daddy or me am? Does you think dat you are better den your brother Billie-de Kid? Nose your not. Billie de Kid is worth a dozen such things as yer. He onners his daddy and his mudder and he helps em to get grub that such as you can feed that onery face of yourn. Yous are not fit to lib in de same society as Billie De Kid.

(Enters Billie left side)

Billie. Mudder Ise got pinched ter night by dat smart cop Mulligan I just swiped a ticker from a blind man preacher and was making my

get away when Mulligan collared me and wot you think? Dat Blind Man tole de cop to let me go. He gave me dis past board and told me to go home to me mudder. (Lays down card on table.)

Nelle. And you didn't get de ticker? Well try again. Find some rich yap and get something that will pay yous. Keep yer eye on de cops, don't let dem bluff yer. I'll be out in a jiffy me self and yous can bet that Nelle will bring in something wurse wile.

Florence picks up the card reads it then puts it in her pocket. Billie sits at table and eats.

Nelle. Sis here tinks she is too good to help us get wot we need from de rich guys. It don't blong to dem more den to us—dey never worked for wot dey got. Yous poor daddy is in Sing Sing now cause he is poor and the man is rich who sent him there. If ever I caught dat yahoo in de right place he neber would send another poor man up—(she gets up to go and as she goes out she says) I goes over to Doyers street to meet a guy dat has de dough dat we need to get our bread wid—(she laughs.)

Florence. Mother I would like to go to the Mission in Doyers street to hear more bout that Jesus that the little lady told me bout.

Nelle. (angry) You can't go you lazy thing. Wot you mean any how? That hussey that talked to you told you lies. You would do better if you would do as me and Billie is going to do. Don't get that coco noggin of yours full of trash like that Salvation Army hussey tole you; sides you can't

go eas some of dem chinks der in China town would get you, but den he wouldn't get much.

(Nell exit left side)

Billie. So yous think dat woman tolle you what is so wen she tolle you that big story bout that feller Jesus?

Florence. Yes, brother, I am sure she told me true and she told bout Heaven. The place we go wen we die if we are good and try to do right.

Billie. I believe she lies cas wen we die, we only go to de hole in de ground. How can we go up to Heaven when we go down in de ground?

Florence. I think the lady tolle me wot is so and I want to go to the Mission to have some one tell me more about Jesus and Heaven. The man you swiped the watch from tonight was a preacher. I want to see him. He can tell me bout Jesus.

Billie. You kin see him if you want to but sure tell him dat Billie de Kid am a good boy, dat he neber swipe any thing—(aside) unless he gets a good chance. (Billie laughs.)

Florence. I will not say that you never swipe any thing. I'll tell him that I want you to learn about Jesus and I'll ask him to tell me all about him so I can tell you. (Billie goes out left side.)

Florence. I don't care what they all say. I believe that Jesus is good and he will help me if I find out how to ask him. O I do want to be good like the lady told me to be.

End 2nd Scene

Curtain down

SCENE III

In Blind Phils Study. Carpet on floor, reading table, pictures on wall, easy chairs, etc. Phil has a large book on table to represent the blind bible. Phil repeats the 23rd Psalm as he repeats the last line a knock is heard off left side.

Phil. Come in.

(Enter *Florence* from left side)
Goes up to opposite side of table from *Phil*.

Florence. My brother gave me your card telling where you lived. I come to ask you about Jesus. I want to know more about him.

Phil. My dear girl, I'll be glad to tell you about Jesus but what made you think about him?

Florence. One time last summer I was over to Chatham Square beggin when the Salvation Army came up to the corner where I was and began singing and telling about God and about Jesus and one little lady dressed in blue with a funny bonnet on come up to me and took hold of my hand and kissed me and said, little girl do you know about Jesus? I tolle her I did not. No one ever told me anything—then she tolle me a whole lot. She said if I would be good that Jesus would take me to Heaven and I would never have to beg or steal or do anything that was wicked, so ever since I have been trying to be good. I wont steal any more now nor I wont lie and I want to be good all the time.

Phil. What is your name?

Florence. Florence Nolan is me name. Me father is Jeems, the Yeg-

man. He is now on the Island doing time for robbing a man. Me Mudder is Nelle who used to be de Bowery Queen and Billie de Kid is me brother.

Phil. Well Florence, I believe that Jesus sent you to me. Sit down and I'll tell you about him. (*She sits down.*) (*He stands up by her and lays his hand on her head.*) Well, my dear, nearly 2000 years ago the world was very wicked so God concluded that he would give all men a chance to be redeemed—so he sent his only son on earth to teach the people how to live and how to do God's will. The people were very wicked and after Jesus, who was God's only son, had lived until he was about 33 years old, the people concluded to kill Him, so they got him and gave him a trial and condemned him to die on the cross. They nailed him to the cross and he died and they buried him and after three days He arose and now He is in Heaven with God and he knows all about us. He knows that you want to be good and He will help you. You can talk to Jesus and he will hear you and will help you do just as you want to do. All you have to do is to get down on your knees and tell Jesus just how you feel and ask him to help you. He never will fail you.

Florence. Oh Mister, is that all true? Will Jesus help me do what I want to do?

Phil. Jesus will help you to do just as you want to do, so long as you want to do right.

Florence. (*Clapping her hands and says*)

Oh Goody, goody, goody I am going to ask Jesus to help me get my

father, mudder and brudder to know about Him and love Him, just as I love Him. Mister, wont you help me? Wont you ask Jesus to help me?

Phil. Yes, my dear, I will help you and I think that great good will come from our united efforts.

End Scene Third

Curtain

SCENE IV

In Phils Study same as previous scene (a few changes in fixtures.) Phil reading his Bible. A knock at door.

Phil. Come in. (*And Nelle comes in on left side.*)

Nelle. And are ye the preacher?

Phil. Yes Madam, I am a minister of the gospel.

Nelle. My little sis has been tellin bout you. She was here about six months ago. She wanted to come again. I wouldn't let her cas I thot I didn't want her to hear bout your nonsense bout that feller Jesus. But Sis is sick now and she kept telling me to go and fine yous. So I got a kid to show me wer you lived. Sis had your address on a card and now I am here. Sis wants you to come to my house an see her.

Phil. Where do you live?

Nelle. At de corner of Bloom Street and de Bowery.

Phil. Go and tell her that I'll be there as soon as I can.

Nelle. Well I'll hurry cas Sis is purty sick.

(She goes off left side and in a minute returns.)

Nelle. Mr. preacher it is very dark and its raining an I don't know wich way to go to git home. I never was this far away from de Bowery before. My little sis is very sick an I expect her to die. De kid that show me the way here has gone. Oh wot will me do? Me wants to see my little sis. Me has a feeling here dat hurts me. (Places her hand over her heart.)

Phil. My sister in trouble, if you will allow a blind man to lead you I'll take you to the corner of Bloom street and the Bowery to your home. The darkness makes no difference to me. I know the right way to go just follow me. (The blind man goes off the left side feeling his way with his cane, Nelle following.)

End of Scene Four

Curtain

SCENE V

In Nells home—Same room as 2nd Scene. A cheap cot with little Florence on it. Billie de Kid and Jeems, the Yegman, on the side facing audience and back part of stage. Back in the right hand corner is a cross about 6 foot tall and a black curtain in front of it so it is hid from sight.

(Enters Phil and Nelle) *Nelle takes seat near foot of cot. Phil goes up to Florence and lays his hand on her head.*

Phil. My little sister wanted me to come and see her.

Florence. (Raises her head and takes hold Phills hand.)

Oh I am so glad that you come. Please tell me daddy and mudder bout Jesus for I am going to Jesus party soon.

Phil. Jesus is the best friend we ever had. He will take care of us if we only trust in Him. And when the time comes we will be ready to go to Him and live happy ever afterwards. There can be no trouble, no sorrow, no pain. All will be joy when we get to where Jesus is. Jesus can make the blind see for he says so in this wonderful book that he has given to the world as a guide. (He holds up the Bible and repeats Matt. 20:29-34) and if you people here wants to see with new eyes so that you will understand all about our Lord Jesus who is the light of the world, all you will have to do is to have faith and trust in Him and you will receive light. Now, I am blind and cannot see the things of this world, yet I can see the beautiful things of the world where Jesus is and if you have a desire you may see the same beautiful things with the same strong light that I see them.

Nelle. Mr. Preacher we are all too bad. Jesus would have nothin to do with us.

Phil. This book which is the words of Jesus says that if you accept Him and believe in Him you will be saved.

Nelle. Jesus can't save me. I have done ever mean thing that any woman could do. I am past savin.

Phil. Jesus says for God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.

Jeems. (Rising to his feet leaning forward holds out his hands towards *Phil.*) Dos yer mean ter say dat Jesus will save such a bloak as me. Me who has killed my feller man, me who has robbed, who hasserved time for doing all kinds of crime. Save me, who has turned many a trick dat has never been found out dat Ise the feller that done dejob. Mr. Preacher, I am Jeems the yegman, de pulice all no me. I have done many a job in dis city dat no one nose but I just got out of Sing Sing and if any cop from de Battery to Harlem got their glimmers on me I would be a gonner eas dey wants me for a bad trick that I turned and they can prove against me. I'd hev to go to der Island fer ten years fer dis job.

Phil. Though your sins were as scarlet Jesus will make them as white as snow. When He was nailed to the cross he suffered for you as well as for me. Only accept him, then all things will come right.

Florence (Raises her head and holds out her arms as though reaching for some one) O there is Jesus he has come for me. O how beautiful, ma ma, daddy, Billie! Oh I wish that you all was ready to go. Good-bye! Good-bye! Come! Come! See the light! Come!

(Lays back down)

Nelle. (Raises to her feet) Oh Mr. Preacher, don't let her go. I can't give her up. There is a pain here. (Places her hand over her heart)

I guess I love my little sis.

Phil. She has gone to Jesus and now is safe in his arms. If we believe in Jesus and trust in Him we will spend eternity with Him. (All kneel and Nearer my God to thee is sung by six or eight girls behind curtain).

Jeems. Mr. Preacher I think I am going to see dat light. I feel as if I wanted Jesus to take care of me.

Nelle. And I am willing to trust in Jesus. O show me the way.

Billie (Wiping his eyes and says in broken voice) Mr. Preacher I wan to go long wid de crowd. Sis has tole me nuff bout Jesus dat I want HIm. I can see de light ahead. It has been all darkness in de past.

(All still kneeling)

At this time the curtain before the cross is drawn back and there will be a girl about Florences age holding to the cross (Use a strong light) and leave this scene while the girls behind the curtain will sing Rock of Ages. As curtain is drawn back after the hymn is completed all rise to their feet.

Nelle. Mr. preacher you have shown us de way from de past darkness to de future light. Now I want to tell you bout one thin dat Jeems and I done bout twelve years ago. We was working one of our games on Park Row an as we wus passin a store we saw a baby in a buggy. It was a boy bout two years old. Jeems an me took dat boy and got to our room. We raised dat boy. We showed him how to steal, to swipe everything that he could, we showed him how to git things out of de rich guys pocket, and Jeems tole him how



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Jesus has ta
as I expect
even this is forgiven against you.
Out of the darkness of the past we
are led into the new light of the
future.

The End

These plays can be secured from C.
E. Thomas the Author. Columbus,
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to do de trick of pickin locks and
crackin de cribs and how to hit de
cops on der head in der right place so
he could make his git away. Dat
boy is Billie de Kid. He is not our
boy. (*She points at Billie*) Can we
be forgiven for dat?

Phil. (very excited) Did the boy
have any jewelry on him?

Nelle. Yes he had a chain around
his neck—we sold dat — but he had
dis mettle fastened to de chain.

(*She hands Phil a medal about the
size of a dollar*)

Phil. What does it say on this
medal?

Nelle. W. K. son of P. K.

Phil. William Kline, son of
Phillip Kline. Thank God. He is my
lost son. (*Holds his arms out and
Billie goes to him and Phil embraces
him and holds him a moment. Billie
acts as though crying.*)

Phil Twelve years ago my son
was stolen from my wife and I on
Park Row. We hunted everywhere.
We spent most all of our fortune that
we had trying to find him. My
good wife worried until she died less
than two years after she lost the
boy. I was left alone. A disease
came to me and took away my sight.
But praise the Lord Jesus came to
me and gave me a new sight so I
could see the new light. You ask if
you and your husband can be for-
given for taking this boy and doing
as you have done, I will say that

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